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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRIDGETOWN 000906

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [EAID](#) [ETRD](#) [CH](#) [TX](#) [ST](#) [XL](#)
SUBJECT: ST. LUCIA: GOVERNMENT CRISIS POSSIBLE

REF: BRIDGETOWN 525

Classified By: DCM Mary Ellen T. Gilroy for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Post's May 10 meeting with St. Lucia's Comptroller of Customs and the Acting Commissioner of Police was a cry for help from PM Compton and his few remaining loyalists. While PM Compton is reportedly recovering in New York from a stroke, his chances of hanging on to power may be diminishing. Should PM Compton fall from power, his warring cabinet and party may choose a successor, Richard Fredrick, who has known narcotrafficking ties. St. Lucia's Acting PM Stephenson King, a Compton loyalist, is seeking U.S. assistance to build a case against Fredrick in order to prevent his rise to power. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) On May 9, Post received a request for an urgent meeting with St. Lucia's Comptroller of Customs, Terence Leonard, and the Acting Commissioner of Police, John Broughton. (Note: Broughton is a former UK police officer brought to St. Lucia to assist with the country's law enforcement reforms.) The meeting took place on May 10 in Embassy Bridgetown. Per request from the St. Lucians, Embassy's law enforcement agencies, including FBI and DEA, were present at the meeting; PolOff also participated. According to Leonard and Broughton, they requested the meeting with Post based on instructions from Acting PM Stephenson King, who presumably received instructions from PM Compton.

NEWS OF PM COMPTON'S STROKE

13. (C) Leonard and Broughton confirmed the rumors of PM Compton's hospitalization, stating that Compton is recovering in New York from a stroke. They doubted that he would be able to return to his government responsibilities, given his advanced age. (Note: PM Compton is 83 years old. End Note.) The stroke reportedly left PM Compton with slurred speech, a symptom that may persist for some time if not permanently. However, Leonard and Broughton told Post that Compton is not ready to give up power just yet. He apparently told Acting PM King that, upon his return from the United States, he would fire the eight ministers who formed a rival cabinet faction and led the St. Lucian government to recognize Taiwan over China without Compton's agreement (reftel).

14. (C) The news of Compton's stroke leaked out in a St.

Lucian radio call-in program on May 10. Although Acting PM King called the radio program to quash the story, regional media picked it up. The following day, May 11, regional media and news outlets reported on PM Compton's stroke and hospitalization. Leonard and Broughton shared with Post their concerns that the public is already doubtful of the official explanation offered by Acting PM King that PM Compton was in the United States for routine medical tests and that the tests extended beyond what had been initially expected. However, they admitted that the public's attention was temporarily diverted by the St. Lucia Jazz Festival taking place during May 4-13.

GOVERNMENT CRISIS AHEAD?

15. (C) Leonard and Broughton were clearly concerned that PM Compton may lose the premiership in the near future. They believe that Foreign Minister Rufus Bousquet and Housing Minister Richard Fredrick, the two leaders of the anti-Compton cabinet faction, will try to seize power. Although the cabinet has been putting on a show of unity since the April 30 recognition of Taiwan that sparked the current crisis, rumors and speculations about the cabinet split are circulating widely. The absence of both PM Compton and Foreign Minister Bousquet from St. Lucia over the past week may have helped keep the Compton government from unraveling. However, Bousquet is due to return from travel abroad in the next few days, and his return may set the political maneuverings back in motion. Post's meeting with Leonard and Broughton revealed that Acting PM King is overwhelmed and scared. A long-time Compton loyalist, King is experienced but does not appear to be politically savvy or sufficiently powerful to reassert control over the cabinet in PM Compton's absence.

16. (C) Should PM Compton retire or be forced to retire from office and parliament, the remaining ten United Workers Party (UWP) members of parliament would choose a new prime minister. PM Compton's departure from government would not necessarily trigger a dissolution of parliament and automatic elections. Comment: This is probably something that Bousquet and Fredrick are banking on because they might not be well positioned to win new elections. Leonard and Broughton told us that St. Lucians, who admire PM Compton as the "Father of St. Lucia's Independence," would, at the very least, object to the shabby treatment PM Compton received at the hands of his party colleagues. Opposition St. Lucia Labour Party (SLP) would undoubtedly seek to capitalize on that sentiment. End Comment.

17. (C) Even without new elections, Leonard and Broughton were worried that public discontent could boil over and lead to protests and civil unrest. In addition to the PM Compton loyalists, hundreds of St. Lucians have recently lost their jobs on various construction sites because: 1) immediately after the April 30 Taiwan announcement, China terminated various construction projects on the island; and 2) the Minister of Works, Guy Joseph, cancelled all government capital projects in order to conduct inquiries into cost overruns by the previous government. Post convened an EAC on May 11 to discuss the possibility of civil unrest in St. Lucia and review possible response strategies.

"NEUTRALIZING" FREDRICK

18. (C) Even though Bousquet led the political coup, Leonard and Broughton told Post that his accession to the premiership is by no means assured, should PM Compton step down or be forced out. In their view, Fredrick, who has ties to criminal figures engaged in money laundering and nacrotrafficking, is popular enough and has deep enough pockets to unseat Bousquet. This scenario apparently prompted Leonard and Broughton's meeting with Post. Acting PM King -- and likely PM Compton himself -- are looking for ways to neutralize Fredrick. Leonard and Broughton requested any evidence that the United States might have that would

assist them in building a case against Fredrick. Post law enforcement officials explained that DHS/ICE was working to expedite St. Lucia's earlier MLAT request for documents related to possible customs violations by Fredrick. Leonard and Broughton also met with the UK High Commission to brief them on the situation in St. Lucia and follow up on a potential UK lead also related to Fredrick. (Comment: King, Leonard, and Broughton are engaged in a high-stakes game in going after Fredrick. Leonard and Broughton told Post that they can trust only few people in St. Lucia's law enforcement agencies because of Fredrick's extensive network of friends and informants. End Comment.)

COMMENT

¶9. (C) Leonard and Broughton presented a much more worrying picture of St. Lucia's political developments. They and other PM Compton loyalists are clearly holding out little hope that PM Compton will be able to recover and reassert control over the government. If Fredrick rises to the Prime Minister's or Deputy Prime Minister's office, Leonard and Broughton's high-stakes game of neutralizing Fredrick would likely become Mission Impossible.

¶10. (C) However, most political analysts agree that St. Lucians did not vote for the UWP in the December 2006 election, but for Sir John Compton. With his retirement probable and popular protests possible, St. Lucia may face a period of political instability that could result in the voters demanding elections in the near future. Such elections would likely return the SLP to power. An SLP government would likely continue in the direction it had set in its previous term of closer ties with Venezuela and Cuba, and less emphasis on cooperation with the United States. However, an SLP government would return Fredrick to the opposition and increase the chances of his arrest.

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